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Ladies and Gentlemen I would first like to start by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. Connecticut is one of 14 states that do not require a health education credit before graduation. I grew up in Manchester, CT and went through Manchester Public Schools my whole life including all of the mandatory sexual education classes. They were pretty much useless though. I already knew everything they were teaching us and they weren't educating us on how to protect ourselves or how to go about doing so. I was blessed enough to have a mother that was my best friend. When I came to an age when I was ready to be sexually active I could talk to her and she took me to her gynecologist. Her gynecologist asked me why I should be having sex at the age of 17? She hesitantly and judgmentally put me on birth control but was not supportive. Many of my other friends in high school there only option was Planned Parenthood. I accompanied a friend one time for an office visit. I found them to be convenient, friendly, thorough and most importantly non-judgmental. Ladies and Gentleman it is prevention that we are lacking. Abstinence does not work, kids are having sex whether we like it or not but how are we keeping them safe through this process? The answer is we are not. An estimated 80,000 CT High School students report that they have had sexual intercourse and nearly 80% first had sexual intercourse between the ages of 13 and 16. Young girls are ending up pregnant and having abortions or becoming teen parents.

We are missing a major loophole here. Why are we not appropriately protecting our youth? The proper education and information is missing to keep adolescents safe. A 2007 study revealed that 75 percent of adults and 56 percent of teens believe that young people should receive information about abstinence and contraception. More than eight in 10 Americans believe that young people should be taught how to use and where to obtain contraception. Ninety-nine percent of Americans believe it is appropriate for young people to have information on STDs and ninety-four percent of Americans think it is appropriate to teach young people about birth control. So why is it that in the state of Connecticut we are keeping this right from our children? No one wants to go through having an abortion or to become a teen parent but it happens all the time. We need a major change in our reproductive health system education. We need a far more comprehensive approach to this. We need a major change in the way in which we treat adolescent girls because I was one of them not too long ago and it's a hell to live through. The pressures are immense and the resources are scarce. Unless you have an amazing mother to lead the way you are pretty much a lost soul. Ladies and Gentlemen thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of women in Connecticut.